

ELM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

14 AUGUST 2012 – 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Brand, Chairman; Councillors Cotterell, Mrs Cotterell, Mrs Hopkin, Mrs Johnson, Milham, Pinnock, Softley, Stokes and Webb.

In attendance: District Councillor Sutton.

Apologies: Councillor Tilney and County Councillor Mrs Tuck.

The minutes of the meeting of 17 July 2012 were confirmed and signed.

41/12 Members' Code of Conduct

Further to minute 31/12, the Clerk both reminded members of the need for them to submit completed Register of Member Interests forms to the Monitoring Officer at Fenland District Council and reported on the process for publication of copies of the documents on the Parish Council's website.

The Parish Council's website host/administrator has stated that publication of the Register of Member Interests forms can be achieved by linking the documents to the respective councillor's contact details on the website and that publication of this information would result in no additional cost to the Parish Council.

Members decided the information reported by the Clerk be noted.

42/12 Progress on actions from minutes of last meeting

(1) Facilities for young people in the parish (minute 32/12 (1))

The Clerk reported that, on the basis that he had been unable to obtain an update from Fenland District Council on progress since that reported at minute 32/12 (1), he had assumed that the current situation is no different to that reported at minute 32/12 (1).

Members expressed disappointment that a period of six months had elapsed since the site meeting, involving members of the Parish Council and the Parks and Open Spaces Manager at Fenland District Council on 16 February 2012, and that the project appears to be no further forward. In response, the Clerk explained that the speed at which this matter can be progressed is in the hands of the developer of the Grove Gardens estate (as the open space on the development is still in the ownership of that company).

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that he would continue to seek updates from Fenland District Council for reporting to each meeting of the Parish Council;
- (2) the Clerk would inform Fenland District Council (FDC) of the Parish Council's disappointment regarding the lack of progress in FDC's adoption of the public open space at this site and the consequent delivery of an equipped play area at Grove Gardens.

(2) Coldham playing field – electricity supply (minute 32/12 (3))

The Chairman reported that the Coldham Residents' Action Group Ltd (CRAG) is in the process of obtaining additional quotations for the cost of installing an electricity supply at Coldham playing field. One additional quotation has been received by CRAG - this quotation is incomplete, so will require CRAG to seek the missing information from the contractor - and the receipt of a further quotation is expected next week. The Chairman informed members that the additional information sought by the Parish Council would be reported at the next meeting.

The Clerk informed members that he had written to Fenland District Council - requesting that the criteria for accessing this Section 106 Obligation money be broadened, so that this funding could be used in ways which would achieve greater community benefit – but, to date, had received no response.

District Councillor Sutton reported that this matter is currently being examined by officers of the Legal Services and Developments Services teams at Fenland District Council (FDC) and that his understanding is that a response would be received by the Clerk very soon.

Through discussion of accessing Section 106 Planning Obligation monies to contribute towards the cost of providing an electricity supply at Coldham playing field, the issue widened into the principles behind requiring Section 106 Planning Obligation contributions and the uses to which such monies could be put.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Chairman, the Clerk and District Councillor Sutton be noted;
- (2) the Planning Agreements Officer at Fenland District Council be invited to attend the next meeting of the Parish Council to both explain the principles of Section 106 Planning Obligations funding and hopefully and to relay the answer the specific response to the Coldham issue;
- (3) this matter continue to be considered at the each meeting of the Parish Council until a final decision in relation to the request for financial support to CRAG is taken.

(3) Speed limit on March Road, Coldham (minute 32/12 (4))

The Clerk reported that the Local Highway Authority would be publicising the Parish Council's proposal for a speed limit change, in a combined press advertisement with a number of other such proposals, on 24 August 2012; the closing date for the submission of objections to the proposal will be 14 September 2012.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted.

(4) Elm Cemetery – maintenance (minute 39/12)

The Clerk informed members that, in accordance with the decision at minute 39/12, the Parish Council's grounds maintenance contractor had mown the extended area at the rear of the cemetery.

In addition, the Clerk reported that, in the light of concerns from some local residents concerning cut grass lying on the ground following cutting at the cemetery, he had obtained a quotation from the Parish Council's grounds maintenance contractor for the cost of using a boxed mower for grass cutting at the cemetery; the additional annual cost to box and collect the grass would be £2,362.50 (on the basis of 30 cuts per annum at an additional cost of £78.75 per cut).

One member suggested that the use of mowers with mulching decks could provide a solution to this issue.

Members decided that

- (1) no change be made to the grass cutting arrangements for Elm Cemetery this year but the matter be considered in early 2013, prior to that year's grass cutting season;
- (2) the Clerk would refer to the Parish Council's grounds maintenance contractor the suggestion that the use of mowers with mulching decks could provide a solution to the issue of cut grass lying on the ground following cutting at the cemetery

43/12 Police matters

The Clerk reported that PCSO Dave Russ was unable to attend the meeting and that he had not produced a report for presentation to members.

Members decided that the situation be noted and expressed their hope that there would be a PCSO presence or report at future meetings.

44/12 Reports from District and County Councillors for the parish

Given the absence from the meeting of the County Councillor (Mrs Tuck) who represents the parish of Elm, no report was received by the Parish Council in relation to current County Council issues.

Both Councillors Cotterell and Sutton, the two District Councillors who represent the parish of Elm, informed the Parish Council of Fenland District Council's consultation exercise, which is taking place between 13 August and 20 October 2012, concerning changes to Council Tax Benefit which will take effect from April 2013.

The changes to Council Tax Benefit (CTB) arrangements are necessary as the Government will, with effect from April 2013, be reducing by 10% the level of funding to District Councils for the provision of CTB. Because the Government has stated that the level of CTB awarded to persons of state pensionable age will not be reduced from the current level, Fenland District Council is proposing to reduce by 20% the level of CTB awarded to all other claimants (with the exception of certain vulnerable groups).

The details of the proposals can be viewed via the following website link: www.fenland.gov.uk/localcounciltaxbenefit.

Members decided that the information reported by District Councillors Cotterell and Sutton be noted.

45/12 Planning applications

Members considered the following planning applications and decided to submit to the Local Planning Authority the comments set out (in italics) below:

- (1) Erection of ground mounted solar photovoltaic panels at Maltmas Farm, Maltmas Drove, Fridaybridge – F/YR12/0530/F (applicant: Mr R Singh).

That the application be supported.

In addition, members expressed their disappointment that the Local Planning Authority had not pointed out within the documentation provided to the Parish Council the retrospective nature of this application.

- (2) Erection of a three-storey, 5-bed dwelling and detached double garage on land east of Soffits, Halfpenny Lane, Elm – F/YR12/0482/F = revised application by virtue of removal of garage from the proposal and change to visibility splays (applicants: Mr and Mrs M Gower).

That the application be supported.

Further to minute 20/11, the Clerk reported the submission of an appeal against Fenland District Council's refusal to grant planning permission for the erection of four dwellings, involving demolition of existing garage, at land east of 176 to 180 Fridaybridge Road, Elm (application reference F/YR11/0344/O) and to consider the opportunity to submit a representation to the Planning Inspectorate in relation to this matter and informed members of the process for the Parish Council's submission to the Planning Inspectorate, if it wished to do so, of comments additional to those made previously to the Local Planning Authority.

The Clerk reminded members of the comments made by the Parish Council to the District Council in relation to this application, as set out at minute 20/11.

Councillor Stokes read to members Fenland District Council's reasons for refusal of this planning permission and questioned the appropriateness of those reasons.

Members decided that no representation be made to the Planning Inspectorate by the Parish Council but noted that Councillor Stokes may decide to submit his personal views regarding the matter.

46/12 Financial matters

The Clerk reported on the Parish Council's income and expenditure since the last meeting, as follows:

Income

Richard King Memorials	Memorial tablet in garden of Rest - Veal	£100.00
P Barnes	Interment of ashes and plot purchase (£235), Scattering of ashes (£50), Interment (£250).	£535.00
Hanchets	Memorial tablet in garden of Rest - Hellon	£100.00
Kent Memorials	Cemetery memorial	£275.00
Maxey Grounds	Cottage rent (less fees and boiler repair)	£433.60
Total Income		£1,443.60

Expenditure

Glazewing	Wheelie bin emptying – Elm Cemetery	£54.00
R J Warren Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	£1,465.42
T Jordan	Salary (less income tax of £114.04), Broadband and other expenses	£547.66
Total Expenditure		£2,067.08

In addition, the Clerk reported on the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 July 2012 (in the total sum of £124,658.41), together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 July 2011.

Members decided that

- (1) the income of £1,443.60 be noted and that the expenditure of £2,067.08 be authorised;
- (2) the levels of funding held within the Parish Council's bank and savings accounts as at 31 July 2012, together with the month-end figures for each of the preceding six months and as at 31 July 2011, be noted.

47/12 Consultation items

(1) Dog Control Orders for Fenland

Members considered, for the purpose of responding to the consultation exercise, Fenland District Council's proposed new policy approach to dog control issues in the district.

The proposals both update current powers to tackle dog fouling and propose new powers to control loose and nuisance dogs. There are four main proposals about which Fenland District Council is seeking feedback; these are:

1. Update powers to tackle dog fouling (a replacement of current powers with a potential Fixed Penalty Notice of £75 not £50 as is currently the case)
2. Dogs to be put on a lead when directed - to deal with loose and nuisance dog issues as they occur
3. Dogs to be kept on a lead in certain parks - (again where play areas or cemeteries are in use)
4. Dogs excluded from certain parks (mostly small children's play areas and some cemeteries).

Current proposals would make provision for powers 1 and 2 above to be used across the whole of Fenland, where appropriate. Powers 3 and 4 will only be implemented in parks and open spaces as described above.

In addition, the legislation which makes these provisions available may be adopted by Town and Parish Councils for use on their land.

Members decided that the proposals of Fenland District Council (FDC) be supported by Elm Parish Council and that the Parish Council would pursue with FDC the adoption of similar proposals for land owned by the Parish Council.

(2) Fenland Communities Development Plan - Core Strategy DPD (Further Consultation Draft) and Policies Map

Members considered Fenland District Council's emerging Core Strategy document and Policies Map that will form part of the development plan for Fenland; known as the Fenland Communities Development Plan. These documents will establish the overall framework for growth and development in Fenland up to 2031.

The documents include: a vision for what Fenland could be like in 2031; some objectives to explain what is trying to be achieved; a set of draft policies setting out what and how much development should take place.

Fenland District Council makes the point that the comments submitted through the consultation exercise it undertook between July and September 2011 (minute 45/11 (3) refers) have been taken into account in producing this latest draft.

The document has also been updated to ensure that it is in line with the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012. One of the most significant changes to the Core Strategy is the introduction of Strategic Allocations. These are the sites that will deliver the bulk of the growth in Fenland over the next 20 years.

The strategy focuses on the key issues and seeks to guide development, but not stifle it. It gives freedoms and flexibilities as to precisely where, how and when growth will occur; this will give local communities the maximum opportunity to get development exactly as they want it.

This latest consultation exercise concludes at 5.00 pm on 5 September 2012.

Members decided that they had no comments to make in relation to this current consultation exercise.

(3) Public attendees at Parish Council meetings

Councillor Cotterell mentioned a suggestion that been made by Councillor Pinnock (by e-mail to the Clerk since the last meeting of the Parish Council) that a process be introduced whereby members of the public attending Elm Parish Council meetings would be requested to complete an attendance sheet (asking them to provide name, address and, where applicable, any organisation or body which they are representing and for this sheet to be circulated amongst councillors during the meeting.

The Clerk reported that he had consulted members, via e-mail, on the suggestion to introduce such a process and that the majority of those who had responded did not support the suggestion. Consequently, the Clerk had not introduced such a process at this meeting.

Members decided that introduction of such a process be considered at the next meeting.

48/12 Elm and Fridaybridge Youth Club

Further to minute 148/11, Councillor Pinnock enquired, being mindful of the fact that the youth club is likely to be seeking further financial support from the Parish Council in 2012/13, of the Clerk as to whether the Youth Service had provided any update on activities and developments at the youth club since minute 148/11. The Clerk informed members that he had received no further information since the presentation at minute 148/11 but would be happy to seek any specific information required by members.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that Councillors Pinnock and Stokes would attend, separately, a future session of the youth club (which takes place on Thursday evenings) and report their observations/conclusions at the subsequent meeting(s) of the Parish Council.

49/12 Proposal for an Elm Football Club and use of the playing field at Begdale Road, Elm

Further to minute 130/11, the Clerk informed members of the current position in this matter, as follows:

- The Elm football team has been using the playing field over recent weeks for training purposes.
- The club is ready to purchase the necessary equipment, such as goal nets and a pitch line marker.
- The team has been accepted into the Cambridgeshire Football Association Sunday League, for which the criteria is less stringent than for the Saturday League; for acceptance into the Sunday League, there is no requirement for the club to possess toilets and showers within its changing facilities.
- Initially, the team's matches will take place at Away grounds; it is currently planned that, subject to the Parish Council's agreement, Home games will begin at Elm on 9 September 2012.
- Purchase by the club of a portacabin is in hand and its siting within the area agreed by the Parish Council is proposed for the August Bank Holiday weekend.

- The Elm Football Club is working on a two-stage approach to this initiative - firstly, for the team to become established in the Sunday League; secondly, to develop the on-site changing facilities (to include toilets and showers) and then apply for acceptance into the Saturday League.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted and that the football club's proposals for siting of the portacabin and use of the playing field for Home matches with effect from 9 September 2012 be approved.

50/12 Correspondence

(1) Annual Coldham Village Fun Day.

The Clerk reported a request from the Coldham Residents Action Group Ltd (CRAG) for financial support towards the cost of hiring disabled toilet facilities at the fifth Annual Coldham Village Fun Day, which takes place on 18 August 2012.

The cost of providing one disabled toilet at the event is £132.00.

The Clerk reminded members that the Parish Council had provided such financial support for this event in 2011.

Members decided that the Parish Council would meet the cost of providing a disabled toilet for the fifth Annual Coldham Village Fun Day.

(2) Post Office re-location in Elm.

Further to minute 28/12 (2), the Clerk reported a letter from the Post Office, in which it informs the Parish Council that, having considered the results of the consultation exercise, the village Post Office would re-locate from its current location on High Road to the shop premises at Birch Grove, Elm.

Under the arrangement, the current Post Office branch would close at 12.30 pm on 31 August and the new branch would open at 9.00 am on 4 September 2012. The Post Office will be monitoring the new branch over the next twelve months to ascertain if this service meets the needs of its customers in the local community.

The Post Office makes the point that this re-location will secure Post Office services to the community of Elm in the longer-term.

Members decided that the content of the letter from the Post Office be noted.

51/12 Highway safety in Elm

Councillor Cotterell reported concerns expressed by local people regarding the danger to motorists exiting Halfpenny Lane to enter the B1101 because of vehicles travelling at speed around the sharp bend (when travelling from March direction towards Wisbech) just ahead of the Halfpenny Lane access on to the main road.

A number of members shared Councillor Cotterell's opinion that this situation is "an accident waiting to happen" and felt that it would be desirable if some form of highway safety measures could be implemented (with the aim of making vehicles reduce speed when approaching Halfpenny Lane). Members feel that the difficulty will increase as the Fenland District Council, as the Local Planning Authority, continues to allow additional development on Halfpenny Lane.

Members decided that the Clerk would make a request of the Local Highway Authority (LHA) for a site meeting to be held (involving the relevant officer of the LHA and members of the Parish Council), with the aim of discussing possible measures to reduce the potential for accidents at the Halfpenny Lane/B1101 junction.

52/12 Date of next meeting

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Parish Council had been scheduled for 18 September 2012, commencing at 7.00 pm, at the Parish Council office, Begdale Road, Elm.

Meeting finished at 8.20 pm

Signature:.....(Council Chairman).

Date:.....